

#### **IV. B. 9. National Wilderness Areas**

- a) Background. The U.S. Wilderness Act was passed in 1964 in order to,

*“.....assure that an increasing population, accompanied by expanding settlement and growing mechanization, does not occupy and modify all areas within the United States and its possessions, leaving no lands designated for preservation and protection in their natural condition, it is hereby declared to be the policy of the Congress to secure for the American people of present and future generations the benefits of an enduring resource of wilderness. For this purpose there is hereby established a National Wilderness Preservation System to be composed of federally owned areas designated by Congress as "wilderness areas", and these shall be administered for the use and enjoyment of the American people in such manner as will leave them unimpaired for future use and enjoyment as wilderness, and so as to provide for the protection of these areas, the preservation of their wilderness character, and for the gathering and dissemination of information regarding their use and enjoyment as wilderness.....”*

The Act was ratified to protect particularly environmentally pristine areas of the United States under Federal ownership and management practices. Wilderness areas are generally larger than 5000 acres and have retained their primeval character. In the U.S. there are over 100 million acres of Federal land designated Wilderness by Congressional legislation. Additional areas have been added to the National Wilderness System over the years and Colorado now possesses 38 National Wildlife Areas managed by four Federal agencies and totaling 3,276,064 acres.



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National Wilderness Area



Potential Rural Development actions near or adjacent to National Wilderness Areas merit special evaluation because of the types of resources they contain which are covered by other significant Federal environmental directives such as: (1) the Endangered Species Act, (2) the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, (3) Executive Order 11990, "Protection of Wetlands", etc.

b) Governing Regulations.

- (1) The U.S. Wilderness Act of 1964.
- (2) The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976.
- (3) U.S. Executive Order 11514, Protection and Enhancement of Environmental Quality.
- (4) National Environmental Policy Act, 42 U.S.C. 4321.
- (5) Title 7, Part 1b and 1c, Code of Federal Regulations, U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Environmental Policy Act.

c) Policy. Rural Development should not authorize, fund, or carry out any proposal or project that will likely jeopardize the unique values and benefits of designated study wilderness areas. Whenever a proposed action has the potential for affecting a wilderness area, the appropriate contact at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, or U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management or National Park Service, should be consulted as early as possible in the environmental impact analysis process to evaluate the possible consequences of and protective requirements necessary concerning the action.

d) Classification.

- (1) Designated National Wilderness Area.
- (2) Under study for classification as a National Wilderness Area.

e) Agency Jurisdiction.

Confer with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service (FS) and the U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), National Park Service (NPS), or Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), as appropriate, for impacts to National Wilderness Areas within their jurisdictions.



Following is Region 2 Office contact information for the U. S. Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Regional Office:

U.S. Forest Service  
Rocky Mountain Region  
Natural Resources Information  
P.O. Box 25127  
Lakewood, Colorado 80225

Contact: Steve Gregonis, (303) 275-5350

<http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/>

Information pertinent to U.S. Forest Service field offices for National Forests located in Colorado may be found at the following web-site:

<http://www.fs.fed.us/recreation/states/co.shtml>

The Bureau of Land Management manages 8.3 million acres of public lands in Colorado. These lands are managed for a multitude of uses including, but not limited to, recreation, mining, wildlife habitat and livestock grazing. Along with these 8.3 million acres, BLM oversees 27.3 million subsurface acres for mineral development. Following is the Colorado State Office contact for the U. S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management:

U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management  
Colorado State Office  
Natural Resources  
2850 Youngfield Street  
Lakewood, Colorado 80215-7076

Contact: Bob Schmidt, (303) 239-3801.

<http://www.co.blm.gov>



Following is Intermountain Region Office contact information for the U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service:

U.S. Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
Intermountain Region  
P.O. 25287  
Denver, Colorado 80225-0287

Contact: Hal Grovert, Superintendent, Colorado Plateau and Rocky Mountain  
Clusters, (303) 969-2800

[http://www.nps.gov/pub\\_aff/imfa.htm](http://www.nps.gov/pub_aff/imfa.htm)

Following is Region VI Office contact information for the U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service:

U.S. Department of the Interior  
Fish and Wildlife Service  
Ecological Services  
Lee Carlson, Project Leader  
P.O. Box 25486, DSC  
Denver, Colorado 80225

(303) 275-2370

<http://www.fws.gov>

- f) Location of Resource. The National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS) is composed of a number of large tracts of land which exemplify exception geological, ecological (i.e. endangered species), cultural (i.e. Native American sacred sites), and scenic values worthy of national preservation objectives. The FS, BLM, NPS, and FWS each maintain inventories of designated and study wilderness areas in their respective jurisdictions. National Wilderness Areas typically cross FS, BLM, NPS, and FWS jurisdictional boundaries and may lie inside National Parks, National Monuments, National Forests, etc.



Following is a listing of FS managed National Wilderness Areas in Colorado as of this writing:

<b>Wilderness</b>	<b>Agency</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>Year Created</b>
Buffalo Peaks	FS	Colorado	43,410	1993
Byers Peak	FS	Colorado	8,913	1993
Cache La Poudre	FS	Colorado	9,238	1980
Collegiate Peaks	FS	Colorado	166,938	1980
Comanche Peak	FS	Colorado	66,791	1980
Eagles Nest	FS	Colorado	132,906	1976
Flat Tops	FS	Colorado	235,035	1975
Fossil Ridge	FS	Colorado	31,534	1993
Greenhorn Mountain	FS	Colorado	22,040	1993
Holy Cross	FS	Colorado	122,797	1980
Hunter-Fryingpan	FS	Colorado	81,866	1978
Indian Peaks	FS	Colorado	70,374	1978
La Garita	FS	Colorado	128,858	1964
Lizard Head	FS	Colorado	41,193	1980
Lost Creek	FS	Colorado	119,790	1980
Maroon Bells-Snowmass	FS	Colorado	181,117	1964
Mount Evans	FS	Colorado	74,401	1980
Mount Massive	FS	Colorado	27,980	1980
Mount Sneffels	FS	Colorado	16,565	1980
Mount Zirkel	FS	Colorado	159,935	1964
Neota	FS	Colorado	9,924	1980
Never Summer	FS	Colorado	20,747	1980
Platte River	FS	Colorado	743	1984
Powderhorn	FS	Colorado	13,395	1993
Ptarmigan Peak	FS	Colorado	12,594	1993
Raggeds	FS	Colorado	64,992	1980
Rawah	FS	Colorado	73,068	1964
Sangre de Cristo	FS	Colorado	226,420	1993
Sarvis Creek	FS	Colorado	45,190	1993
South San Juan	FS	Colorado	158,790	1980
Uncompahgre	FS	Colorado	99,331	1980
Vasquez Peak	FS	Colorado	12,986	1993
Weminuche	FS	Colorado	488,200	1975
West Elk	FS	Colorado	176,172	1964

Following is a listing of BLM managed National Wilderness Areas in Colorado as of this writing:

<b>Wilderness</b>	<b>Agency</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>Year Created</b>
Gunnison Gorge	BLM	Colorado	17,700	
1999				
Powderhorn	BLM	Colorado	48,115	1993
Uncompahgre	BLM	Colorado	3,390	1980



Following is a listing of NPS managed National Wilderness Areas in Colorado as of this writing:

<b>Wilderness</b>	<b>Agency</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>Year Created</b>
Black Canyon of the Gunnison	NPS	Colorado	15,599	1976
Great Sand Dunes	NPS	Colorado	33,450	1976
Indian Peaks	NPS	Colorado	2,917	1978
Mesa Verde	NPS	Colorado	8,100	1976

Following is a listing of FWS managed National Wilderness Areas in Colorado as of this writing:

<b>Wilderness</b>	<b>Agency</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>Year Created</b>
Mount Massive	FWS	Colorado	2,560	1980

More detailed information concerning each NWA can be obtained at the following web-site:

[http://www.wilderness.net/nwps/search\\_wild\\_areas\\_main.cfm](http://www.wilderness.net/nwps/search_wild_areas_main.cfm)

An important point to keep in mind is that the boundaries of these resource areas change fairly frequently with land purchases and trades. If a proposed action appears that it would be located near a NWA boundary, the pertinent Federal land management agency should be contacted to verify where the current boundary is.

g) Other References.

- 1) National Wilderness Preservation System: *"National Wilderness Act of 1964"*

(Full text)

[http://www.wilderness.net/nwps/legis/nwps\\_act.cfm](http://www.wilderness.net/nwps/legis/nwps_act.cfm)

- 2) National Wilderness Preservation System: U.S. and Colorado maps of National Wilderness System area.

(An excellent web-site with clickable U.S. and Colorado maps as well as photographs and narratives of all National Wilderness Areas)

<http://www.wilderness.net/nwps/map.cfm>